



# Annual Report 2023

## Governor's Council on Disability



GOVERNOR'S COUNCIL  
ON DISABILITY

## Office of Administration

# Governor's Council on Disability (GCD)

301 West High Street, Room 620  
PO Box 1668  
Jefferson City, MO 65102

Phone: 573-751-2600  
Toll-free: 800-877-8249  
E-mail: [gcd@oa.mo.gov](mailto:gcd@oa.mo.gov)  
Website: [disability.mo.gov/gcd](http://disability.mo.gov/gcd)

#### GCD staff:

Claudia Browner – Executive Director  
Laura Mueth – Senior Program Specialist  
Rachel Rackers – Senior Program Specialist  
Jennifer Pettit – Lead Administrative Support Assistant



*Photo: Rachel, Claudia, Jenn, Laura*

# Table of Contents

History	4
Mission / Vision / Goals	4
Council Membership	5
Organizational Structure	7
Council Events 2023 / Programs	8
Finances	9
Programs and Initiatives	10
Technical Assistance	10
Publications / Resources	11
Awards Programs	12
Legislative Programs	15
Missouri Youth Leadership Forum	17
Virtual Leadership Summit	18
Employment Initiatives	19
Outreach Activities	21
Boards and Commissions	22
Upcoming Events / 2024 Meeting Dates	24

# History

The Governor's Council on Disability traces its roots to the World War II era. In 1947, President Harry S Truman issued an Executive Order establishing the President's Committee on Employment of the Handicapped. This Committee was created to assist WWII veterans living with disabilities with reentry into the civilian workforce. In 1949, Missouri established the state Governor's Committee to share information about work related problems facing people living with disabilities. In 1977, the Governor's Committee was established as a state agency and in 1994, the agency's name was changed, and the statute was updated to broaden the agency's mission beyond employment, enabling the Governor's Council on Disability to become a voice for more than one million Missourians living with disabilities in all facets of life, including state government.

# Mission

To provide leadership and support so people with disabilities achieve inclusion and independence.

# Vision

The Missouri Governor's Council on Disability will be recognized statewide as the primary organization providing leadership to improve the lives of Missouri citizens with disabilities.

# Goals

The Governor's Council on Disability's Strategic and Operational Plan was updated and approved for 2023 - 2027 on November 18, 2022. The Goals are:

- Goal I: Advise all state agencies and non-governmental organizations to advocate for policies and practices that impact Missouri citizens with disabilities.
- Goal II: Encourage system changes and public policies that eliminate barriers and support the wellbeing and independence of individuals with disabilities.
- Goal III: Expand opportunities for independence for people with disabilities in all aspects of their lives.
- Goal IV: Gather input from the public on disability related issues and report the results of this information.
- Goal V: Develop, explore, and implement strategies to increase resources for the operating efficiency of the Council.

For the complete Strategic Plan, please visit our website at <https://disability.mo.gov/gcd> and click on Strategic Plan.

# Council Membership

- 20 members and a chairperson comprise the Council.
- Council members are appointed by the Governor.
- The appointment of the chairperson requires the advice and consent of the Missouri Senate.
- Members represent each of the eight U.S. Congressional Districts.
- The majority of members are people with disabilities.
- The Governor's Council on Disability is comprised of the following committees: Executive, Advocacy, and Programs.
- The Council conducts quarterly meetings.
- Effective December 30, 2023, there are six Council member positions vacant.



**Ronald Hack**  
**Council Chair**  
Sunset Hills  
Appointed: 6/28/22  
Confirmed: 3/8/23



**Joan Bergstrom**  
Member 1  
Lee's Summit  
First Appointed: 7/15/08



**Charles Comstock II**  
6th Congressional District  
Kirksville  
First Appointed: 7/29/10



**Wayne Crawford**  
Member 3  
Marshall  
First Appointed: 3/15/21



**Betty Davidson**  
Member 5  
St. Louis  
First Appointed: 11/16/09



**Rosemary Hendon**  
8th Congressional District  
West Plains  
First Appointed: 1/6/17



**Raymond “Chip” Hailey**  
7th Congressional District  
Joplin  
First Appointed: 1/6/17



**Katie Jones**  
Member 4  
St. Peters  
First Appointed: 10/27/17



**Kim Lackey**  
Member 12  
St. Louis  
First Appointed: 7/9/19



**Elijah Mayfield**  
Member 11  
Jefferson City  
First Appointed: 3/14/18



**Susan Orton**  
Member 8  
Creve Coeur  
First Appointed: 7/19/05



**Traci Ritter**  
Member 6  
Cape Girardeau  
First Appointed: 3/15/21



**Andrew Sartorius**  
3<sup>rd</sup> Congressional District  
Jefferson City  
First Appointed: 7/9/19



**Lesia Shelton**  
4<sup>th</sup> Congressional District  
Buffalo  
First Appointed: 7/9/19

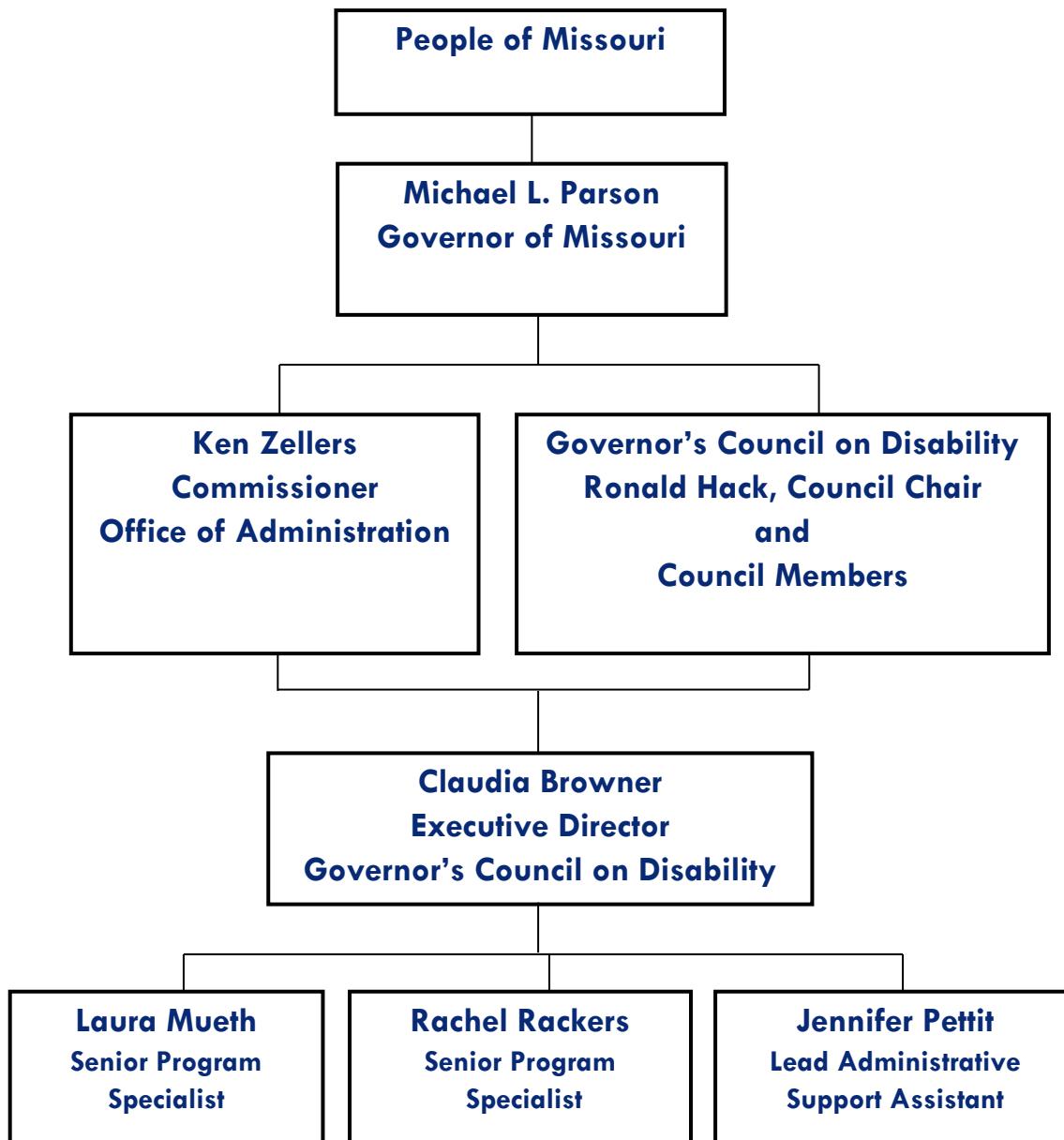


**James Trout**  
1<sup>st</sup> Congressional District  
Webster Groves  
First Appointed: 3/4/09  
Resigned effective 12/30/23



**Robert Wallace**  
Member 2  
St. Louis  
First Appointed: 5/10/10

# Organizational Structure



# Council Events 2023

## Council Membership

- Council Chair Ron Hack's appointment was confirmed by the Missouri State Senate on March 8
- Council member James Trout resigned from his member position effective December 30, 2023

## Programs and Initiatives

- GCD participated in the Office of Administration's Diversity and Inclusion Council
- GCD participated in the Master Plan on Aging Advisory Council – Housing and Aging in Place Subcommittee
- GCD established state government ADA Coordinator Network and facilitated quarterly meetings
- GCD collaborated with other disability agencies and organizations on planning and facilitating Disability Rights Legislative Day on March 1
- GCD developed and maintained partnerships among the state departments and state department liaisons participate in the quarterly Council meetings and provide input from their departments
- GCD staff provided educational presentations to organizations, agencies, and employers throughout Missouri on a variety of disability-related topics such as employment of people with disabilities, disability awareness, accessibility, service animals and the GCD youth programs
- GCD staff served on state agency teams, committees and boards to exchange information and collaborate with disability-related organizations
- GCD participated in awareness activities to celebrate National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM) during the month of October
- GCD staff participated in the National Association of Youth Leadership Forums (AYLF)
- GCD Executive Director participated in the National Association of Governor's Councils
- GCD published six issues of the GCD Newsletter covering disability-related topics
- GCD continued its annual programs:
  - GCD Awards Programs – Inclusion Award and Youth Leadership Award
  - GCD Poster Contest celebrating National Disability Employment Awareness Month
  - GCD Youth Programs
    - Missouri Youth Leadership Forum
    - Virtual Leadership Summit
  - Legislative Programs
    - Legislative Education Project (LEP)
    - Legislative Priorities Poll
    - Legislative Update
    - Disability Rights Legislative Day

## Finances

The Governor's Council on Disability's programs and services are funded from General Revenue, with the exception of the youth transition programs. This funding covers personnel costs and expenses for most Council activities. The Fiscal Year 2024 (July 1, 2023 – June 30, 2024) budget is listed below:

Personnel (4 FTE):	\$216,083.00
Operating Expenses:	<u>\$ 25,283.00</u>
Total:	\$241,366.00

At the time of publication, the Council has spent/encumbered \$9,685 in operating expenses, or 38% of the FY24 budget. Expenses include supplies, postage, telecommunications, Council meeting expenses, travel, professional development, disability accommodations, and expenses for GCD programs.

---

The Missouri Youth Leadership Forum (MO-YLF) and Virtual Leadership Summit (VLS) are programs that are **not** funded from General Revenue funds. These programs are funded through a combination of sponsorships and donations. Paraquad, Inc., a Center for Independent Living in St. Louis, serves as the 501(c)3 fiscal agent for these programs.

The following is a summary of the **2023 MO-YLF/VLS** budget and program expenditures.

Beginning balance in <b>MO-YLF/VLS</b> account on January 1, 2023:	\$ 92,316.21
Donations/sponsorships/deposits received in 2023:	\$100,773.35
MO-YLF Expenditures	\$ (71,616.16)
VLS Expenditures	<u>\$ (4,192.30)</u>
Balance in MO-YLF/VLS account (December 1, 2023)	<u>\$ 117,281.10</u>

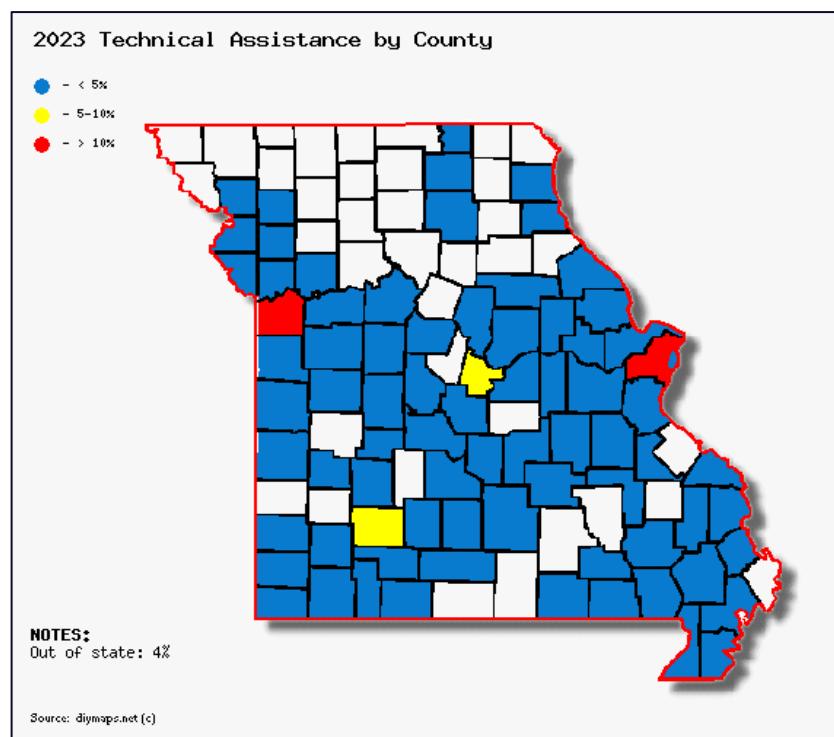
# Programs and Initiatives

## Technical Assistance

The Governor's Council on Disability (GCD) provides disability-related technical assistance to individuals, businesses, governmental and agency representatives in Missouri, and other states. Most contacts are from individuals in need of resources in order to live more independently. Referrals are made to state and federal agencies, local community resources, Centers for Independent Living, non-profit organizations, including faith-based groups and Community Action Agencies. In some instances, referrals are made to businesses or for-profit entities. The GCD also works with state agencies, state legislators and the Governor's Office on constituent affairs to provide solutions to individuals' concerns and issues.

In 2023, the GCD received a substantial number of calls and e-mail inquiries concerning disability services, financial assistance, and eligibility requirements for disability benefits (51%), service animals (16%), and housing (14%). Other common inquiries included requests for information about employment, legal/advocacy issues, transportation, accommodations, ADA guidelines and regulations, Universal Design standards, accessible parking, FMLA issues, and questions about potential discrimination in employment, housing or in public places.

Overall, the GCD assisted 697 different individuals with their phone inquiries and responded to 805 email inquiries and requests.



The counties displayed on the map include:

**Group I (<5% of inquiries):**

Adair, Andrew, Audrain, Barry, Bates, Benton, Bollinger, Boone, Buchanan, Butler, Callaway, Camden, Cape Girardeau, Carter, Cass, Cedar, Christian, Clay, Clinton, Cooper, Crawford, DeKalb, Dent, Douglas, Dunklin, Franklin, Gasconade, Henry, Hickory, Iron, Jasper, Jefferson, Johnson, Laclede, Lafayette, Lawrence, Lewis, Lincoln, Macon, Marion, McDonald, Miller, Montgomery, Morgan, New Madrid, Newton, Oregon, Osage, Pemiscot, Perry, Pettis, Phelps, Pike, Platte, Polk, Pulaski, Ray, Ripley, Saline, Schuyler, Scott, St. Charles, St. Francois, St. Louis City, Stoddard, Stone, Taney, Texas, Vernon, Warren, Washington, Wayne, Webster, Wright

**Group II (5-10% of inquiries):**

Cole, Greene

**Group III (>10% of inquiries):**

Jackson (12%), St. Louis County (21%)

Total number of counties listed: 77 of 114 Missouri counties, plus the city of St. Louis.

## Publications / Resources

### **Disability Web Portal and Directory of Resources for Missourians with Disabilities**

The Governor's Council on Disability publishes a variety of educational videos, resources, and information on the [Disability Web Portal](#), including the *Resource Directory for Missourians with Disabilities*. The online Directory allows each user to search for disability-related resources by category or location.

### **Legislative Update**

During the legislative session, a weekly [Legislative Update](#) is distributed to keep individuals up to date on legislation that potentially affects individuals with disabilities. Over 1,300 individuals subscribed to the publication.

### **GCD Newsletter**

The GCD publishes six issues of the GCD Newsletter per year about disability-related topics and GCD activities. The newsletter is sent out by e-mail and posted on the website and social media. The newsletters can be found online at [http://disability.mo.gov/gcd/newsletters.htm](#)

### **Accessible Parking PSA**

The Governor's Council on Disability provides a public service announcement video to educate about the importance of accessible parking spaces for individuals with disabilities, and to remind people to keep access aisles open for those who need them to transfer in and out of the vehicles. The PSA is available at [https://disability.mo.gov/transportation.htm](#) or [https://youtu.be/4OpEtjbNhgA](#)

### **Accessibility Guide: A toolkit for accessible communications in the workplace**

The Accessibility Guides and coordinating learning paths for state team members and public use provide information and training resources on making events and communications accessible.

[https://disability.mo.gov/AT.htm](#)

### **Capitol Access Guide**

The Governor's Council on Disability collaborates with the Missouri Assistive Technology Council to provide an online publication with information about accessibility and accommodations at the Missouri State Capitol.

The guide is available at [https://at.mo.gov/information-resources-publications/cap-access-guide.html](#)

### **Other Publications**

The Governor's Council on Disability also disseminated a variety of program information and publications, including "*This is Not a Ticket*" which provides educational information about accessible parking, and brochures and flyers relating to service animals, emotional support animals, and assistance animals.

# Awards Programs

The Governor's Council on Disability annually recognizes individuals or organizations who promote and demonstrate leadership in inclusion of individuals with disabilities in all aspects of community living. Recognizing best practices in Inclusion and outstanding efforts in Youth Leadership increases awareness about the importance of inclusion in all aspects of community living and awards accomplishments in advocacy efforts for the disability community. The Council selects the winners of the awards, who are nominated by individuals or organizations in their communities.

## Inclusion Award

The Inclusion Award recognizes individuals, businesses, agencies, or organizations that have implemented innovative measures to incorporate people with disabilities into their programs, activities, and operations.

### 31st Annual Inclusion Award winner for 2022: Tim Lewin, Embassy Suites St. Louis – St. Charles

*Photo: Tim Lewin, 4 Embassy Suites team members, and GCD director Browner*



Embassy Suites St. Louis – St. Charles and General Manager Tim Lewin have demonstrated excellent inclusive practices for many years by creating a dynamic, supportive culture that welcomes individuals with disabilities to the hospitality industry. Through partnerships with local programs, individuals with disabilities learn hard and soft skills of working at a hotel. These experiences give students an up-close look at competitive employment. Embassy uses a simple mentor model to welcome individuals with

disabilities and reports that inclusion has naturally become part of its culture.

The business has gone above and beyond to mentor and hire employees with disabilities, which has led to adults with disabilities comprising 25% of the total staff. Lewin models kindness, understanding, and a work ethic that leads everyone on his team to do the same. He is an inclusion champion in every way.

### Inclusion Award – Honorable Mention: Brock Sousa, Hannibal Public High School

*Photo: Brock Sousa and GCD director Browner*

Brock Sousa is a teacher for the Hannibal Public High School, but other titles include coach, advocate, mentor, friend, and jack-of-all-trades. Sousa embodies inclusion and employment first in a rural area. He has been helping others see the importance of a diverse workforce, inclusive practices, and community outreach opportunities.

This started with the BEST Program (Basic Employment Skills Training) in 2017. In the first BEST year, four students applied for jobs and began working at Hannibal Regional Hospital during the school day through



the school year. Today, the program has grown to 16 students, 4 community job sites, and many continued agency partnerships.

Sousa strives to give students every opportunity possible to gain work experience and access to their local communities so that they can be included and involved.

For additional information about the annual Inclusion Awards, please visit our website at <https://disability.mo.gov/gcd/inclusionawards>

## Youth Leadership Award

The Youth Leadership Award recognizes emerging leaders in the disability community (ages 16-26) that demonstrate leadership by engaging in activities that have a positive impact on the lives of people with disabilities in their communities.

### 10<sup>th</sup> Annual Youth Leadership Award winner for 2022: Holly Connor

*Photo: Holly Connor*



Holly Connor is senior at Clayton High School in St. Louis, who is an aspiring singer, actor, and musician. Holly plans to attend Webster University this fall to pursue a degree in Vocal Performance and piano, and she is working toward becoming a voice over actor for animated films and cartoons. Holly hopes to continue to create and expand awareness, acceptance, and inclusion, especially within the Arts. Holly has extraordinary musical skills, and her passions are performing live musical theater, singing opera, and playing instruments. She plays piano, tap dances, studies ballet, composes original music, loves telling stories, and has a natural gift of voice and comedic timing. Holly is an award-winning Braille user and has done disability awareness presentations to enlighten others. Holly does not let her disabilities interfere with sharing her message that people of all abilities can be included. Throughout her life, Holly has spread stories of awareness, acceptance, and inclusion with others as she also strives to improve the quality of life of other people with disabilities.

### Youth Leadership Award - Honorable Mention: Samantha Keeney

*Photo: Samantha Keeney*



Samantha (Sam) Keeney is a senior at Van Buren High School, and a graduate of the 2022 Missouri Youth Leadership Forum. Sam is a very outgoing young woman. She enjoys being a member of her high school's Quiz Bowl team and has achieved the all-conference title for two years. Sam is also a very active member of the Senior Beta Club. She does not let her disability define or limit her future. Recently, she provided a presentation at a transition conference to share her experience at the Missouri Youth Leadership Forum.

Sam plans to attend Three Rivers Community College in the fall, before attending Missouri State University in Springfield to study history and become a teacher. Her goal is to

make history fun for all her students.

Sam advocates for others and provides support and encouragement for her peers. She is very studious about knowing the laws and regulations when it comes to having any disability. She wants everyone to be treated fairly and respectfully and sees everyone as equal.

For more information about the annual Youth Leadership Award, please visit our website at  
<http://disability.mo.gov/gcd/youthleadershipawards>

The Governor's Council on Disability presented the awards to the winners at the Power Up Assistive Technology Conference on April 4, 2023.

The Governor's Council on Disability is currently accepting nominations for the 2023 Inclusion and Youth Leadership Awards. **Deadline for nominations is January 31, 2024.**

# Legislative Programs

## Legislative Education Project

The purpose of the Legislative Education Project (LEP) is to educate people about the Missouri legislative process and empower individuals by providing opportunities to become actively involved in public policies that impact people with disabilities.

The LEP is sponsored annually during the legislative session and includes online learning tools as well as educational webinars for individuals and organizations.

The online training modules and videos teach individuals about *How a Bill Becomes a Law*, the *Elected Officials and General Assembly*, and *How to Navigate the House and Senate Websites*. The videos educate about *Accessible Voting*, *Attending a Senate Hearing and Providing Testimony*, and *Building an Effective Relationship with Legislators*. The online learning modules and videos have had 2,576 views, and 57 individuals participated in four LEP webinars during the legislative session to learn about the legislative process, how to get involved in advocacy, and hear about pending legislation that would affect the disability community.

## Legislative Priorities Poll

Each year the Governor's Council on Disability distributes a Legislative Priorities Poll to determine the issues that are important to Missourians with disabilities and those who work and live with them. The poll is sent out to agencies and individuals. This year, 598 individuals from 65 counties in Missouri participated in the poll. Based on the results, the legislative priorities the Governor's Council on Disability will be following during the 2023 legislative session are:

1. The State of Missouri updating websites to include more language that is direct and easy to understand for those with reading or writing difficulties.
2. The Personal Care Attendant/Aide/Direct Support Professional workforce providing critical services.
3. The legislature providing funding for people to renovate or build homes which would allow them to age in place.
4. The State of Missouri ensuring Person First Language is being used on all state associated websites.
5. A freeze on property taxes for people with disabilities.

Outcomes of the Legislative Priorities Poll were shared with the General Assembly and elected officials. The complete report is available online at [https://disability.mo.gov/gcd/legislative\\_priorities\\_poll.htm](https://disability.mo.gov/gcd/legislative_priorities_poll.htm). The GCD will continue to help people with disabilities advocate in the 2024 legislative session. GCD staff will be examining bills relating to disability and analyze their impact on the disability community.

## Legislative Update

The Governor's Council on Disability continues to publish the weekly Legislative Update newsletter during the legislative session to provide information about disability-related bills and their status in the legislative process.

## Disability Rights Legislative Day

The Governor's Council on Disability collaborates with the Missouri DD Council and other disability agencies and organizations to plan and facilitate the annual Disability Rights Legislative Day. The 2023 Disability Rights Legislative Day was held March 1 at the state capitol in Jefferson City and online.

More than 400 individuals and organizations representing Missouri's disability community participated in person, and 182 individuals participated online and attended virtual discussions and presentations with legislators.

More information about Disability Rights Legislative Day is available at <https://drld.org>



# Missouri Youth Leadership Forum

The annual Missouri Youth Leadership Forum (MO-YLF) is a 5-day leadership and career development program for transition age high school students with disabilities.

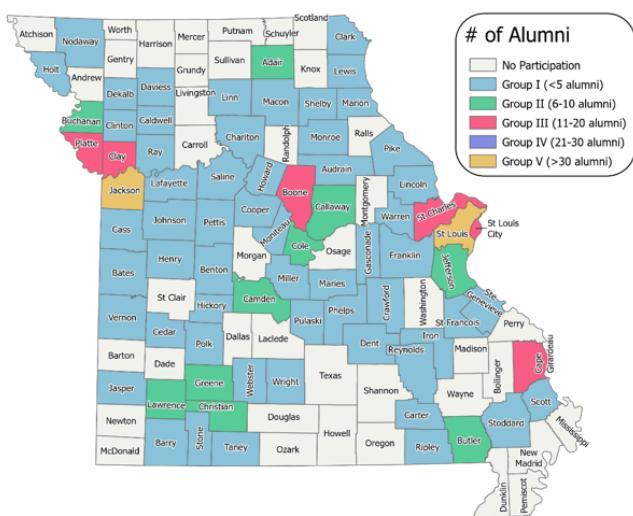


From July 18-22, 2023, 32 delegates representing 17 different counties in Missouri participated in the 19th annual MO-YLF at the University of Missouri in Columbia, where they learned about self-advocacy, mentorship, disability culture and history, the legislative process, independent living, post-secondary transition, assistive technology, and community service.

The program provides an opportunity for students to learn from mentors, program alumni and

volunteers who share similar experiences and grow as leaders in their communities. The delegates get to experience college life while they attend the program and learn about career and college opportunities from an employer panel and post-secondary education professionals. A legislative day at the capitol provides opportunities to learn about the legislative process and self-advocacy, and the community service project teaches the value of volunteering and giving back to those in need. Social activities in the evenings allow time for bonding and friendships to form.

**Missouri Youth Leadership Forum – Alumni by County**



**Group I (less than 5 alumni):** (56 counties)

Audrain, Barry, Bates, Benton, Caldwell, Carter, Cass, Cedar, Chariton, Clark, Clinton, Cooper, Crawford, Daviess, DeKalb, Dent, Franklin, Gasconade, Henry, Hickory, Holt, Howard, Iron, Jasper, Johnson, Lafayette, Lewis, Lincoln, Linn, Macon, Maries, Marion, Miller, Moniteau, Monroe, Nodaway, Pettis, Phelps, Pike, Polk, Pulaski, Ray, Reynolds, Ripley, Ste. Genevieve, St. Francois, Saline, Scott, Shelby, Stoddard, Stone, Taney, Vernon, Warren, Webster, Wright

**Group II (5 – 10 alumni):** (10 counties)

Adair, Buchanan, Butler, Callaway, Camden, Christian, Cole, Greene, Jefferson, Lawrence

**Group III (11 – 20 alumni):** (5 counties plus City of St. Louis)

Boone, Cape Girardeau, Clay, Platte, St. Charles, St. Louis City

**Group IV (21 – 30 alumni):**

none

**Group V (more than 30 alumni):**

Jackson (43), St. Louis County (78)

Since inception of the MO-YLF in 2001, 391 alumni have graduated from the Missouri Youth Leadership Forum, representing 73 of the 114 Missouri counties, plus the city of St. Louis.

New in 2023, the Governor's Council on Disability increased its outreach efforts by offering educational webinars about the Missouri Youth Leadership Forum for potential delegates, parents, educators, and providers. The first two webinars in November and December had 23 participants.

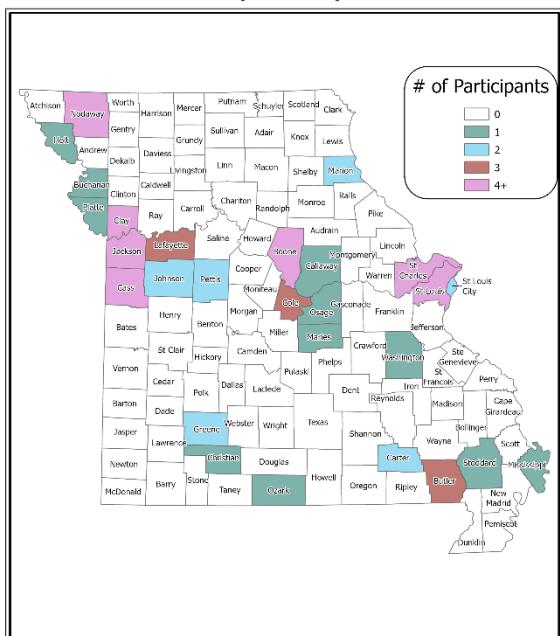
More information about the MO-YLF is available at <https://disability.mo.gov/gcd/ylf>

## Virtual Leadership Summit

A one-day Virtual Leadership Summit (VLS) was held March 4, 2023, and provided 33 transition age Missouri high school students the opportunity to learn about leadership, self-determination, employment, goal setting, and independent living, and prepare them for the weeklong Missouri Youth Leadership Forum.

The VLS also increased the statewide outreach by providing leadership opportunities in different regions of the state and offered five MO-YLF alumni the opportunity to participate as mentors, session leaders and facilitators. Since its inception in 2021, 77 students representing 27 counties in Missouri have participated in the program.

**Virtual Leadership Summit Participants  
by County**



Total number of counties represented – 27 counties

**Counties with one participant – 11 counties:**

Buchanan, Callaway, Christian, Holt, Maries, Mississippi, Osage, Ozark, Platte, Stoddard, Washington

**Counties with two participants – 6 counties:**

Carter, Greene, Johnson, Marion, Pettis, St. Louis City

**Counties with three participants – 3 counties:**

Butler, Cole, Lafayette

**Counties with four or more participants – 7 counties:**

Boone (5), Cass (5), Clay (6), Jackson (5), Nodaway (4), St. Charles (4), St. Louis (16)

# Employment Initiatives

## Missouri as a Model Employer Initiative

In 2019, Governor Parson issued [Executive Order 19-16](#) outlining directives for state agencies to implement the Missouri as a Model Employer initiative. Members of the OA Commissioner's Office, Division of Personnel, Office of Equal Opportunity, and the Governor's Council on Disability collaborated to carry out the directives of the executive order. The efforts focused on gathering data on the number of employees with disabilities in state government through the annual voluntary self-disclosure survey and follow up with each state agency on feedback provided by team members in the survey; awareness and outreach activities during National Disability Employment Awareness Month; and recommending training on disability awareness, diversity and inclusion for all state HR and hiring managers, supervisors, and employees. More information about the initiative can be found online at <https://disability.mo.gov/model-employer.htm>

## National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM)

National Disability Employment Awareness Month is celebrated nationwide throughout the month of October to raise awareness about disability employment issues and celebrate the contributions of America's workers with disabilities. The GCD participated in several NDEAM activities including:

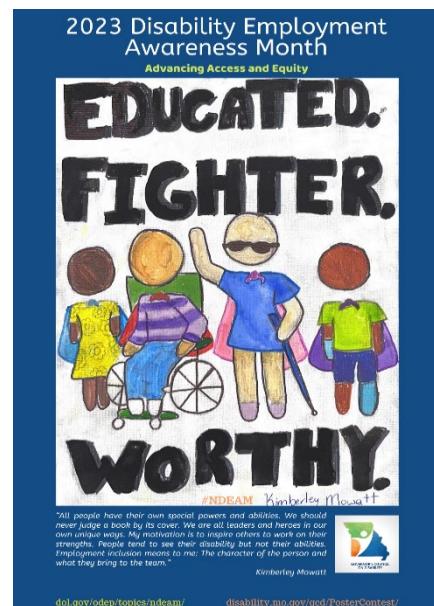
- Receiving proclamations from Governor Parson designating the month of October as National Disability Employment Awareness Month and Disability History month in Missouri
- Providing a virtual exhibit about the history and background of NDEAM, which features resources and information related to the employment of individuals with disabilities (<https://disability.mo.gov/NDEAM.htm>)
- Participating in employment initiatives and NDEAM employment events
- Raising awareness through newsletter articles, social media, and email communications, educational presentations, and the NDEAM poster contest

## Disability Employment Awareness Month Poster Contest

The Governor's Council on Disability (GCD) hosts an annual [poster contest](#) to celebrate Disability Employment Awareness month in Missouri and raise awareness about the importance of employment inclusion for people with disabilities.

The winner of the 2023 NDEAM poster contest was Kimberley Mowatt, from Holts Summit, Missouri.

More info at <https://disability.mo.gov/gcd/PosterContest>



## Other Employment Activities

Additional employment related activities of the GCD included:

- Providing educational presentations to agencies and organizations, on disability awareness and workforce diversity, the employment of people with disabilities and accommodations in the workplace.
- Participating in workgroups and initiatives to improve transition services, employment, and higher education opportunities for people with disabilities.
- Attending educational webinars, conferences, and events on the employment of people with disabilities.
- Serving on the Office of Administration's (OA) Diversity and Inclusion Council.
- Establishing the ADA Coordinator Network for Missouri state government agencies and facilitating quarterly meetings to provide an opportunity for education, training, networking, and sharing best practices.

# Outreach Activities

The Governor's Council on Disability participated in numerous outreach and educational activities throughout the year to promote disability awareness and inclusion of people with disabilities in all aspects of life.

## Disability Web Portal / Website / Social Media

- The **Missouri Disability Web Portal** (<https://disability.mo.gov>) serves as a one-stop access point for the public to obtain information on disability resources and offers links to other entities and state agencies that provide services to people with disabilities. The portal also provides a link to the GCD website. In 2023, the Disability Web Portal and GCD website had 179,858 page views.
- **Social Media:** The GCD Facebook page is reaching a growing number of individuals with more than 2,000 page followers. The Missouri Youth Leadership Forum Facebook has more than 600 page followers, and GCD's Twitter account has over 200 followers to date.
- **Email subscribers:** Over 1,900 individuals are subscribed to GCD listservs to receive disability-related information and GCD program updates.

## Educational Presentations / Outreach / Exhibits

The Governor's Council on Disability provides educational programs on disability rights, etiquette and awareness, employment of people with disabilities, service animals and other disability-related topics to any state agency, group or organization in Missouri requesting such information. Educational programs are specifically tailored to the individuals or groups. During the quarterly public Council meetings, presentations are provided on different disability-related topics.

Throughout the year 2023, the GCD staff:

- Developed and presented 73 educational programs and presentations to 2,769 individuals.
- Provided outreach and shared resources and information with more than 1,350 individuals at 22 meetings, events, and conferences.

# Boards and Commissions

As part of the Governor's Council on Disability's advisory capacity function, staff and Council members serve on a variety of boards and commissions to promote opportunities in all aspects of life, including education, employment, housing, recreation, and transportation. The following is a list of those boards and commissions on which staff and Council members served in calendar year 2023.

- Access and Functional Needs Committee, Statewide
- Advisory Council for the Master Plan on Aging, Statewide
- Association for the Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired (AER), Missouri Chapter, Statewide
- Association of Programs for Rural Independent Living (APRIL), Nationwide
- APRIL Youth and Steering Committees, Nationwide
- AYLF (Association of Youth Leadership Forums), Nationwide
- Brain Injury Association of Missouri, Statewide
- Cape County Board of Developmental Disabilities, Cape Girardeau County
- Community Transition Teams, Statewide
- Disability Rights Legislative Day Planning Committee, Statewide
- Down Syndrome Association of St. Louis
- East-West Gateway Council of Governments, St. Louis
- Employment First Initiative, Statewide
- Future of Self Advocacy, Statewide
- Midwest Inclusive Post-Secondary Alliance (MIPSA), Statewide
- Missouri 911 Service Board
- Missouri as a Model Employer Initiative, Statewide
- Missouri Association of County Developmental Disabilities Services (MACDDS), Statewide
- Missouri Brain Injury Advisory Council, Statewide
- Missouri Centers for Independent Living (MOCIL), Statewide
- Missouri Council of the Blind, Statewide
- Missouri Disability Health Collaborative Advisory Committee, Statewide
- Missouri First Responders Disability Awareness Training Advisory Council, Statewide
- Missouri Health Equity Committee, Statewide
- Missouri Inclusive Housing Development Corporation Board, Statewide
- Missouri Interagency Transition Team, Statewide

- Missouri Rehabilitation Association State Board, Statewide
- Missouri State Deafblind Advisory Committee, Statewide
- Missouri Statewide Independent Living Council, Statewide
- Missouri Transportation Task Force, Statewide
- Missouri UD Initiative
- Missouri Youth Leadership Forum Planning Committee, Statewide
- Money Follows the Person (Show Me Home) Housing Committee, Statewide
- MYLIFE Alumni Association, Statewide
- National Association of Governors' Committees on People with Disabilities, Nationwide
- National Expansion of Employment Opportunities Network (NEON) Planning Team, statewide
- National Federation of the Blind, Nationwide
- Office of Administration Diversity & Inclusion Council, Statewide
- Productive Living Board for St. Louis County Citizens with DD, St. Louis County
- Special School District (SSD) Transition Team, St. Louis
- St. Louis County Commission on Disabilities, St. Louis
- St. Louis Disability Transportation Resource Network, St. Louis
- State of Missouri Diversity and Inclusion Partners, Statewide
- State Rehabilitation Council (Vocational Rehabilitation), Statewide
- State Rehabilitation Council for the Blind, Statewide
- Supported Decision Making Stakeholder Group, Statewide
- Supporting Young People Committee, Statewide
- Transition Training Institute Team, Statewide
- UMSL SUCCEED Advisory Board, St. Louis

# 2024 Meeting and Event Dates

## Governor's Council on Disability (GCD) Quarterly Meetings

- February 16, 2024
- May 3, 2024
- August 16, 2024
- November 15, 2024

Council meetings are open to the public and are held at the Missouri Behavioral Health Council building in Jefferson City, beginning at 10 a.m. or virtually by WebEx and conference call.

## GCD Inclusion and Youth Leadership Awards Presentation

- April 9, 2024

The 2023 annual awards for Inclusion and Youth Leadership will be presented at the Power Up Assistive Technology & Expo conference in Columbia.

## Missouri Youth Leadership Forum

- July 16 – 20, 2024

The 20<sup>th</sup> annual Missouri Youth Leadership Forum for students with disabilities (ages 16-21) will be held at the University of Missouri campus in Columbia.